

Critical Reflection on Conceptualizing the Professional and Humane Teachers in India

This paper is attempting to reflect upon the issue of the process of conceptualization the professional and Humane teachers in India as the process is witnessing severe difficulties for meeting the goal. Since the beginning of this century, the education system in India under the sweeping impact of political, cultural, economical and technological power witnessed pervasive reforms ranging from school to higher education in a very drastic manner. Wide recognition of constructivism, Information communication technologies, incorporation of issues like globalization, gender, environment, equality etc. in the curriculum have been accepted uniformly as the main content of deliberation at the school level. The provision of continuous and comprehensive evaluation backed by the provision of Right to Education Act and universalization of secondary education etc., have intangibly made a paradigm shift in the approaches and professional beliefs of the teachers as well as of the teacher educators respectively as a part of the educated community in India. This shift has profusely given a jolt to the already established professional ethics of the teacher education by expecting them to mould according to the new aspirations of the system. Teachers at any level have to emerge as the active constituent of knowledge in the form of a facilitator not as a silent spectator in transmitting the knowledge. The national Curriculum Frameworks evolved during the dawn of this century in India(NCF 2000,2005) have vociferously created the space for the entire teaching community to redefine the concept of professional ethics in the context of the modern era as well as expected from the teaching community at every stage to apply those ethics as mandatory norms in their professional field.

But before proceeding further, it is vital to understand the meaning of Professional and Humane in its literal sense. According to 1966 ILO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers while defining teaching as a profession stated: 'Teaching should be regarded as a profession: it is a form of public service which requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study; it calls also for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the pupils in their charge'. The ILO Recommendation emphasizes the 'expert knowledge' and 'personal responsibility' of teachers As far as 'professional' as a concept is available, according to de Ruyter, professionals are those that do not only get paid for their work but have an intrinsic motivation to follow a social ideal for which they need specific knowledge and skills, perform their occupation in a relative autonomy and establish their own professional standards that are checked by a professional organization.'(P.7, Professional Ethics in Teaching and professional Teacher Organizations). Similarly, the meaning of Humane is 'compassionate, kind and benevolent.' In this context the professional educator, according to Thompson is 'what constitutes the purposes of teaching and its related characteristic activities and actions should be the basis of professional ethics in teaching and what is not ethical, in professional terms, is that which subverts

After highlighting the background in the preceding lines, it is also significant to understand the rationale of reflecting on the process of conceptualizing the professional and humane teachers in the Indian context.

India is the seventh largest country by geographical area and second most populated country in the world. It is having 29 states, 22 official languages and 1652 mother tongues. Indian education system is highly

complex in nature. It is being provided by public schools at three levels- centre, state and local and private schools. The total number of schools in India at the primary and upper primary level (Grade 1-VIII) are 7,48,547 and Secondary and Senior Secondary schools(IX to XII)till 2010 were 2,00,184 as per the Government record. In correspondence to it, the number of teachers in the country till 2015-16 is 8,69,19,22¹ As far as the Teacher Education Institute in the country is concerned, they are, excluding the western region, are around 21,369.² As per Unified District Information System For Education (UDISE) the PTR at national level for elementary schools is 24:1 and for secondary schools it is 27:1 (Press information Bureau,MHRD,2017)³. With this reality, if one ponder over the task of preparing teachers as per the professional and humane norms, then obviously, it seems difficult to achieve. Since Independence the various Education commissions and committees put major thrust on professional preparation of the teachers, but due to non-availability of the qualified teachers and choosing teaching with a reluctant note have emerged as the major hindrance in professional preparation of the teachers in India. The entire problem can be better understood by the reflection given by National framework for Teacher Education, published by statutory body NCTE (National Council of Teacher Education) in 2010 as ‘The larger reality of school teaching not being a preferred option among students and the dilution of emphasis on public investment in initial teacher education since the 1990s has led to a large scale recruitment of unqualified and under-qualified persons in the formal school system ... Major initiatives during the mid-1990s including the DPEP were focussed only on in-service training of teachers. This has accentuated the divide between pre-service and in-service teacher education. School teachers continue to be isolated from centres of higher learning and their professional development needs remain unaddressed’ (NCFTE,2010,P.6).⁴

After providing the meaning of professionals and Humane, if one tries to juxtapose in an Indian context, then contradictions are difficult to avoid as one can see in the following evidences compiled through different sources.

The first evidence one can see in frequent usages of **corporal punishments** by the teachers in the schools. Despite of strict provisions laid out by the RTE 2009/2010, children in the school are still subjected to severe corporeal punishment like spanking, yelling, standing in front of the class, thrashing, locking them inside the isolated room etc. And in some extreme cases, the children have to lose their lives also due to embarrassment and guilt impinged by the teachers on account of self proclaimed bad behavior. While working on the Paper titled ‘ Use of Corporal Punishment in Relation to Institutional and Personal Variables of Teachers, Garg ,(July 2017)⁵ found the usage of corporeal punishment comparatively more on the children of disadvantaged and marginalized group . According to her, the practice of corporeal punishment is not related with teacher-student ratio or years of experience. Teachers of different category practice it uniformly. According to report of Ministry of women and child development in 2007 ‘two out of three school going children in India are physically abused.’⁶

The second evidence can be taken from the observations and the studies highlighting the absence of professional ethics amongst the teaching community. What is Professional Ethics? It is ‘ *A professional code of ethics outlines teachers' main responsibilities to their students and defines their role in students' lives. Above all, teachers must demonstrate integrity, impartiality and ethical behavior in the classroom and in their conduct with parents and coworkers.* (April 3,2017,google.com).

Now question arises that why, despite of consistent persuasions by the policy makers and the statutory bodies, humane and professional elements could not be inserted as inherent part amongst the teaching community in India? Answers were scattered. Thus, it was decided to compile them in order to get the clear picture.

1. **Adult-child relationship** - In India, like the other Asian countries, adults, in any form are supposed to be venerated without questioning. Unlike the western model, here adults are considering themselves as the sole source of knowledge and the child as tabula rasa. It is applicable in the context of teaching – learning also. Though Indian education system, theoretically give exposures to the pre-service teachers about the progressive philosophy ,psychology and sociology, but on the field when those teachers meet the students, then due to cultural lineage, discard the impressions of training and wear the costumes of prevailing rapport. Kumar ‘pointed out that authority often takes the form of a nurturing autocrat in Indian families and in other social institutions. Such an image of authority discourages any form of challenge or dissent...Independent decision making, questioning and criticism are usually not among the traits encouraged in children by adult members of the family..... The preponderance of the adult figure in children’s literature and in stories included in school textbooks is consistent with the norm of adult-child relationships prevailing in family life and the wider society. The legitimacy of adult dominance is accentuated when the adult happens to be a teacher- someone whose supremacy has been established since yore.’ (Meek Dictator, P.94)⁶ It means the nature of society which treats children as passive recipient cause the teachers also to appear professional and humane in the literal sense because the meaning and perceptions are varied. It gets vindicated when kumar proceeds as with ‘ *The teacher standing in front of children assumes the only role that entrenched norms of adult-child relationship permit. His age, the tacit belief that he possesses the required knowledge and his authority diminish the chances of any fraternal or friendly relationship emerging between him and the children. Teacher training makes a feeble attempt to lure him towards the virtue of friendliness towards his wards, but it is far too weak and haphazard to break the hold of the traditionally expected behavior.*’ (P.95)

- **Inappropriate Teaching –learning Environment** - This inappropriateness can be perceived from multiple angles. Lack of proper teacher- student ratio in the classrooms, lack of infrastructure, lack of incentives, lack of performance based promotions, politics, engagement of the teachers in fulfilling government sponsored programmes like collecting census data , voter data, election duties etc. suppresses the real potential of the teachers to appear humane and professional in the teaching task.

These issues and problems of teachers have been accepted by the Position Paper on Peace Education

published by NCERT as “*The foremost challenge before education for peace that deserves special mention at the outset, is the need to do justice to teachers. We expect a great deal from teachers; and the burden of expectations continues to mount. But the duty to do justice to teachers is overlooked. Teachers’ day is observed; but we turn a blind eye to how teachers live their lives— underpaid and, in some states, paid erratically. In hundreds and thousands of cases, teachers are actually paid a great deal less than their salaries on paper. Many of them have had to pay huge bribes for their jobs and feel demoralized and aggrieved. Thousands live in smouldering resentment. Even the most lowly worker in the organized sector can have recourse to the labour courts for the redressal of grievances. There is no corresponding provision for teachers. It is necessary, therefore, to set up a constitutionally empowered National Tribunal for Teachers with branches in every State and Union Territory to address and redress the grievances of teachers. In large States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar, it might be necessary to have more than one branch to ensure accessibility, affordability, and promptitude. Doing justice to teachers is crucial to implementing education for peace.*” **(Position paper of National Focus Group on Education For Peace,2006)**⁷

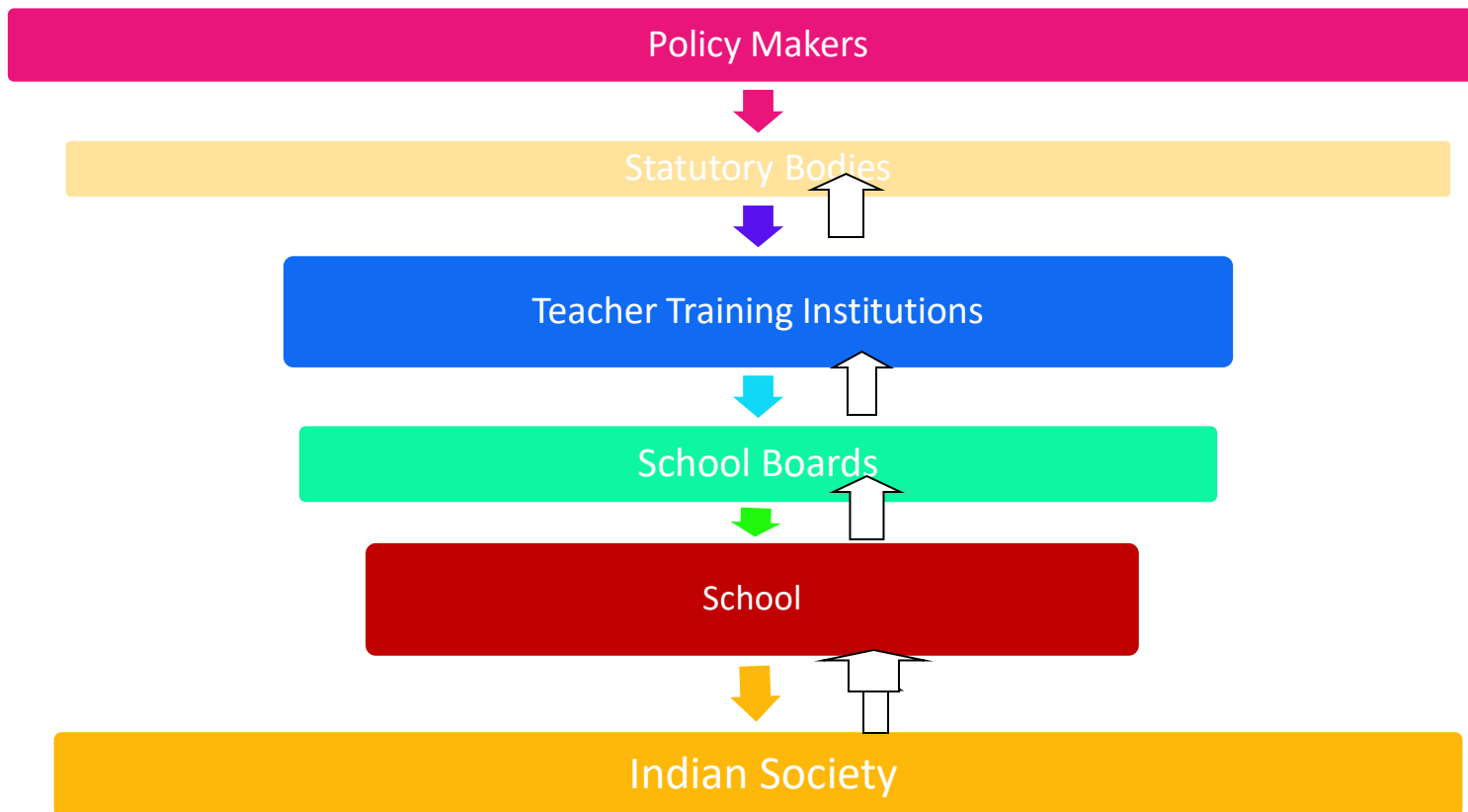
- **Strategies for the preparation of Humane and Professional teachers are missing in the Pre-service and In-Service Teacher Training Programme** - National Curriculum Framework for the Teacher Education 2010 as the standard document, simply mentions desirable environment needed for teaching profession as ‘*Providing professional fora such as meetings in the school and in the cluster to discuss and review one’s practice, to plan for annual work calendars, and on a weekly and monthly basis to plan for one’s teaching as well as to discuss with colleagues, the school academic head and resource persons at the cluster or block level, is an essential aspect of the teaching profession...Teachers could be encouraged to form subject groups at the block level, which could be provided with support to plan for development of teaching of the subject in the block through a variety of ways – seminars for teachers, trainings, ‘melas’ and children’s clubs. These could be given an official status and space at the concerned block resource centre and have linkages with the DIETs, CTEs and IASEs. Such subject groups could be linked with the faculty of local colleges or universities in order to strengthen interactions between groups and provide for synergy between them. Each DIET, CTE and IASE could support a few university faculty fellowships to enable interested people from the university to come and spend up to 4 to 5 months, undertaking activities with teachers and children.*’ But later on document doesn’t give any clue about how to insert these elements under the training of the teachers. Further, though the document under its title proclaim the framework as for preparation of humane and professional teachers, however, the preparation for the humane teachers has not been indicated anywhere. If one is really interested to prepare the teachers in these dual terms, then one has to start by putting it compulsorily under the training programme where the trainees under the controlled conditions

should be exposed, observed, evaluated and graded. In the absence of all these, the goals would remain utopian.

- **Lack of sound internship provision** - Since independence till date, we are not clear about the nature and duration of internship in the schools. Different teacher training programmes offer internship of different duration. The main problem observed is not about the internship provision, but its disparity with enunciated aims and objectives. For example, the two years B.ED programme, launched in 2014, emphasized on reflection and active participant of the trainees in different types of school activities. In reality, it was difficult to implement due to reluctance of the schools in giving approval for such type of practices for 20 weeks. Further, the problem gets compounded when interns are not finding professional behavior amongst the regular teachers and they started imbibing the explicit practices as real one and incorporates in their behavior also. *The curriculum and instruction time available do not provide enough opportunity for the student teachers to reflect on their experiences and prepare them to face the ground realities of teaching in a school (National Council of Teacher Education [NCTE], 2009)*
- **Quality than the grades or marks receive overemphasis** - The close scrutiny of the literature reveals that the policy makers and statutory bodies are putting their major thrust on scoring percentage rather than evolving other qualities to be a genuine teacher. As Taylor⁸ et.al in their paper ‘A More Humane Teacher Education’ stated ‘*there must be more careful selection of the students who enter teacher Preparation. This does not mean just raising the grade point average for admission, for there is no evidence that, beyond certain minimum levels of academic competence. Grades have any bearing on teacher effectiveness.*’ It means apart from grades or marks, it is required to create provisions for giving weightage to certain human qualities needed to be a humane teacher. In order to prove equivalent to other professions or better than them, the sole thrust on academic achievement is making the claim dubious. It was realized long back by the Indian Education Commission 1964-66 as ‘of all the factors that influence quality of education... the quality, competence and character of teachers is undoubtedly the most significant’’. Unfortunately, in the subsequent quality seems to be overlooked for displaying effective quantity. While reflecting on the status of teacher education, Goel and Goel⁹ in the context of preparation of humane and professional teachers emphasized on the need to integrate emotional competencies, life skills, info-savvy skills, techno-pedagogic skills, human development climate and spiritual intelligence.

In the light of the above stated hindrances lying in front of the goal of preparing humane and professional teachers, a Model is being proposed in this regard as follows

A Proposed Model to Develop Humane And Professional Teachers in India



In order to prepare humane and professional teachers in India, the model is starting from the policy makers. It means government at the central and the state level needs to show their genuine concern in reducing the number of gaps prevailing in the education system by increasing the number of schools, recruiting teachers as per requirements, reducing teacher student ratio. According to Right to Education Act 2009/10, the pupil –teacher ratio should be 30:1, but the reality is different. According to the report of OXFAME,India (November 16,2018)¹⁰

- *Average PTR in the country ranges from 10:1 in Andaman to 53:1 in Bihar.*
- *five lakhs sanctioned teacher posts are empty and 6.6 lakhs in-service teachers are untrained.*
- *The RTE Act specifies that no teacher is to engage in non-teaching related activity unless specified by the Act. The 2014 DISE data suggests that 2.48% of teachers were involved in non-teaching tasks for a cumulative of 16 days*
- *The outlay for RTE is woefully inadequate; it is less than 3.5% of the GDP as against the 6% commitment in National Education Policies. Moreover, in 2014-15 only Rs 54,925 crore was approved under SSA, a drop of 22% from 2012-13.*

All these deficiencies in the system need to be addressed on the priority basis so that quality prone education system can be created in the country.

2. **Statutory Bodies** like NCTE in the case of teacher training institutions are required to give final shape to the teacher training curriculum followed by laying down norms and standards for its implementation. There should be homogeneity in the course curriculum. For example, after introducing the B.ED programme for two years, courses were enlisted without any content. Due to it, different teacher training institutions evolved content of those courses as per their convenience, susceptible for varied outcomes. Another thing is that NCTE, while prescribing the course curriculum, should also build some alignments with the school boards in order to gain real field experience by the intern without any hurdle. It has been observed that the prescription and aspirations of NCTE percolated down till the level of the teacher training institutions only without realizing the difficulty of implementing it on the field. The holistic coverage would enlarge the scope of function in terms of actual need of teaching.
3. **Teacher training institutions** are expected to focus more on the training of the pre-service teachers professionally rather than focusing on completion of the syllabus. They are expected to create an ideal professional environment, full of sincerity, responsibility, dignity etc. so that trainees could imbibe those best practices to be used later on in their life. Teaching professional ethics or preparing humane teachers are not being treated as courses; they should be taken as mandatory practices to be imbibed as a teacher. In the teacher training institutions, the training part started missing where the pre-service teachers were used to be kept in a tight and controlled environment and were expected to mould themselves as per the teaching requirements. The dilution of 'training' may be attributed to lack of clarity about the characteristics of teacher educator. A person of any discipline after obtaining entrance mark is eligible to be a teacher educator. Therefore, the passionate teacher educators who carry vision and having capability to nourish the discipline are negligible or failed to be recognized by the system. Another aspect is related with innovation. Though so much thrust has been put on innovations, but hardly time is provided to assess the impact of innovation. Innovations are measured by their success only. Goel and Goel (2012) pointed out that *'The society and its institutions must have the capacity to tolerate genuine mistakes committed inadvertently during the course of innovation. Novel ideas die because of non-incubation. Personalized teacher education, wholistic teacher education, specialized teacher education, and even integrated teacher education are rarely found because we don't have the capacity to tolerate repeated failures arising out of experimentation. One-shot success is a fairy tale and not the reality of life. The society and its institutions must have the capacity to tolerate genuine mistakes committed inadvertently during the course of innovation'* Hence, it is required to bring quality in the teacher training institutions by setting wider scope of innovations, readings, reflections and modesty.
4. **School Boards** – In the Indian context, the major problem is segregation of the stake holders, involved in the field of education and glaring example is aloofness of the school boards with the changing practices in the teacher training institutions. The NCTE while drafting documents for improvements,

only caters the teacher training institutions, but till date it has not shown any collaboration with the prevailing school boards to make the execution effective. Further, school boards never made it mandatory for all the schools to allow the internship with reciprocal dense exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge between in-service and pre-service teachers. The various school boards like CBSE, ICSE, IB etc. should also take onus in preparing the humane and professional teachers by making the norms and guidelines accordingly. The space and provisions must be given so that schools could create constructive and positive environment.

School Environment- In the goals of preparing humane and professional teachers, school environment needs to be recreated to such an extent where right from the Principal, teachers to the students; everybody should treat each other respectfully and gracefully. *An ideal school environment attracts teachers who are knowledgeable, care about student learning, and adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their learners. An ideal school environment tries to be nimble and adjust as the needs of students shift (February 2013 Google.com)* For attaining it, many pending problems need to be resolved like reducing the gap of teacher-student ratio, optimum infrastructure, incentives for innovation, non-partial treatment, good working facilities for the teachers etc. Leaving aside some elite schools, normally other schools in the country are reduced to be the functionaries of the government propaganda. National Centre on the Education and Economy in its report while reflecting on teacher quality and environment stated ‘ *For most students in India, the learning environment is pretty abysmal. School consists of a one-room schoolhouse, one teacher covering multiple grades, and 40 students per teacher. It should be noted that many rural public schools barely have the most basic of facilities (a closed-in building, drinking water, toilets, a blackboard). In addition to these challenges, many rural schools are seriously understaffed, especially in the larger states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. While one teacher may have 40 students per class on average, the unwillingness of many teachers to accept remote rural postings (and the attempts to get these postings changed via lobbying and court cases) means that the actual student-teacher ratio is much higher in many parts of rural India. High student-teacher ratios are exacerbated by high levels of teacher absence and low levels of teaching activity.*’ (2005)

Indian Society - A *society* is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or social territory, typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. Societies are characterized by patterns of relationships (social relations) between individuals who share a distinctive culture and institutions; a given society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituent of members (Wikipedia) For preparing the humane and professional teachers, individual unit primarily in the form of a family and later on the merging of all those units in the form of society need to alter its version for the children as the passive recipient of tabula rasa. As has been elaborated under the problem, our perception for the children is somewhat defective. The protectionist attitude combined together with adult supremacy caused the teachers to adopt inhuman practices with the children. Despite of consistent efforts by the State in the form of Right to Education Act, 2009/2010, National Curriculum Framework 2005 of NCERT and National Framework for Teacher Educators 2009 by NCTE

thrust on changing the prevailing scenario with child centered approaches and apt humane and professionalism, situation in general has hardly changed. For the professional preparation, teachers like the other profession are supposed to realize their responsibility for the profession. Merely acquisition of the degree is not sufficient. Along with that they are expected to maintain integrity with the task of updating, sharing and revising their knowledge time to time. Since society perceives teaching as a casual job, therefore, teachers also behave in the same manner. Over the years, the dominance of females in this profession largely can be seen as the vindication of that prevailing myth that teaching is a very simple job where one has to do everything around the textbook only. Due to it, teachers, they are in-service or pre-service, feel uncomfortable in the absence of the textbook. True professionalism from them would come out only when they perceive themselves not only transmitter of knowledge, but knowledge builder also. In this context, it seems relevant to refer the work of Alka Bihari (2013)¹² who in her paper ‘Professional Development of Elementary Teacher Educators: Issues and Challenges’ cited the work of Danna and Hopper (2008). The latter gave three models of professional development as

“• **Knowledge for Practice:** This is often reflected in traditional professional efforts. It happens when a trainer shares the information produced by education researchers, with the teachers. This kind of knowledge provides the solution for generic dilemma or learning problems.

• **Knowledge in Practice:** This recognizes the importance of teacher’s practical knowledge and its role in improving teaching practice.

• **Knowledge of Practice:** It stresses that through systematic inquiry “teachers make problematic their own knowledge and practice as well as the knowledge and practice of others”. This kind of knowledge is generated when teachers raise questions on their practice, behavior and attitudes and systematically study and reflect their own classroom teaching.”

Similarly for the humane teachers, it is required to insert sensitivity, caring, modest and responsible attitude for the students. In this regard, the Taylor et.al in their paper ‘ A More Humane Teacher Education’ (1971) suggested following measures to be taken like

1. Careful selection of teachers.
2. Reflection of Humanness in the instructional procedure of teacher education
3. Emphasis on individualization of instruction in the teacher education curriculum
4. Pre-service teachers should be given chance for self-evaluation
5. As a paid intern, Pre-service teachers should do teaching for the whole year

In the Indian context, it has been observed that professional and humane aspects of teaching are more explicit in the public school settings and turns out to be reverse in the case of the Government schools. The reason for these differences may be linked with the socio-economic profile of the students. In the report on National Education and economy, Summiya Yasmeen, while giving her opinion for Indian stated “The rich and famous are

typically enrolled in five-star English-medium schools affiliated to the upscale CBSE (all India), CISCE (pan India), and IB examination boards which offer globally accepted syllabuses and curriculums. Next in the pecking order are English medium government aided schools affiliated to State-level examination boards to which the children of the middle grade are sent. The 28 State boards offer inferior infrastructure, sub-standard education and less rigorous syllabuses and examination assessments. And at the base of the education pyramid are shabby, poorly managed government/municipal schools which shove dubious quality language education down the children of the poor majority. (National Centre on the Education and Economy 2005)¹²

These prevailing hierarchies in the school system are supposed to be addressed sincerely particularly for the schools standing at the lowest ladder because there only students are subjected for inhumane treatment. The cases cited above in the paper as interventions like corporal punishments and apathetic behavior are being practices normally in the schools catering the students of the lower socio-economic background, whereas students studying in the top tier of the hierarchy are pampered and being treated over respectfully by the system. Therefore, what is needed to eradicate this gap and children all across the country, irrespective of their school background must receive humane treatment without any discrimination. To ensure it, NCTE in its curriculum framework is required to prepare the teachers accordingly so that teachers not only be familiar with the socio-economic profile of the learners, but be genuine and humane with everybody as per the requirement.

Conclusion:

This paper has tried to discuss the meaning of professional and humane teachers in the Indian context by highlighting the major problems in the preparation followed by suggesting the framework build up under the citations of various studies. The paper aims to prepare the teachers on professional and humane note by drawing the attention of the policy makers, statutory bodies and the society to be fair and non-partial with each and every enrolled child in the school. The tier system of schooling should be scrapped off and teachers' thrust on the given aspects should be done .

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